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CONSCIOUSNESS EXPANDING: INTO THE FORBIDDEN ZONE

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We are beset by plagues: a zombie virus, a brutal war, hatred, and intolerance. Is there any doubt that consciousness expansion is a planetary imperative? If not, what is preventing it? Bob Monroe once said that "[f]ear is the great barrier to human growth."[1]But fear of what, exactly?

Perhaps it is fear of consciousness itself.

Already in the 6th Century BCE, the Greek philosopher Heraclitus recognized that consciousness is infinite. He saw it as depth with no bottom, and therefore no boundaries. But boundaries—cribs, fences, borders, and the membranes of our skin—are what make us feel safe and secure. What's beyond them is unknown, which feels scary, and often threatening.

Furthermore, if consciousness is infinite, then it can't be expanded. What's larger than infinity? What we're really expanding are our ideas and experiences of consciousness. And there's the rub. For these items define us, both to ourselves and in relation to others. What we fear is losing our identity and alienating our kith and kin.

No one is immune to this. Although he had exceptional experiences since childhood, famed psychic Ingo Swann admitted that, well into adulthood, there were certain forbidden thoughts he sought to suppress:

… such as thoughts about where it was that I came from, about my "I-ness" as contrasted to just the body. These topics came to include such esoteric items as past lives, other worlds … imagination of things beyond reality—all the things that make one seem bonkers in the eyes of others. [2]

My own taboos were reincarnation and mythical ancient civilizations. While I accepted the idea of multiple incarnations, I resisted knowing about my own "other selves." Moreover, I dismissed as preposterous all theories of proto-historical, highly advanced civilizations like Atlantis. Such ideas would excite in me an almost irrational animus. Surely signs of subconscious blockages!

Then, eleven years ago, I did Guidelines at the Monroe Institute. During my PREP session, I glimpsed an unforgettable image: a youthful man and woman, standing side by side, locked arm in arm, on the steps of a pyramid-temple like those found in Mesoamerica, Southeast Asia, or ancient Mesopotamia. She was light-skinned, Caucasian, and wore a colorful robe and an elaborate, fanned headdress. His complexion was dark and ruddy, his cheekbones angular and high, and his long, straight hair was jet black. He sported a simple grey tunic. They both smiled, as if posing for a picture. A voice intoned, “She was the Jaguar Princess,” and I somehow knew that he was her husband—and, in some sense, “me.”

This name meant nothing to me, but I dutifully recorded it in my journal. The remainder of the program passed in a blur. The sensations of warmth I’d experienced during the booth session had intensified, as if my whole body was on fire. By the time I arrived home, this “fever” had subsided, but I struggled to focus and act “normal.” For weeks there was a vague but persistent inner “pressure” that left me puzzled and anxious, until I felt a push to write. When I gave my inner assent, the download arrived: a story that called itself a “metaphysical fable,” which unfolded over the course of a week. Its subject was the Jaguar Princess—and Atlantis.

Once upon a time, the Caucasian inhabitants of Atlantis, who had migrated to the island millennia before, gradually subjugated and enslaved the indigenous population. Great wealth and power came at the cost of the moral and spiritual corruption of the rulers. My “counterpart” and his family were indentured servants in the household of a High Priest of the state religion. The Priest recognized the rot within the system, and in his heart no longer served it. Having learned the shamanic arts from a native, he had visions of the coming catastrophe that would doom Atlantis. In secret, he taught selected students, including his own Daughter and my Counterpart, the visionary and healing arts. He also made provisions for his family to depart the island before the End.

This plan went awry when my Counterpart and the Priest’s Daughter fell in love and ran off together. Eventually, the Priest tracked them down to admonish them for their lack of trust in him. Meanwhile, his Son had secretly followed him, and killed my Counterpart on the spot. The Son fled, while the Priest helped his Daughter and young grandson to flee the island with the sailboat, stocked with provisions and maps that he had hidden away. After an arduous journey west, they reached the New World, where they were nursed back to health and adopted by the people, many of whom had made the same journey centuries before. Her shamanic abilities, like her father’s, were powerful, as was her courage, intelligence, honesty, and strength. The people made her their chief, and called her the Jaguar Princess. She was determined to right the wrongs of Atlantis, honor the memory of her husband, and serve justice.

Was there really a Jaguar Princess? I was astonished to discover such a legend among the *Manauele* (Lenca) of El Salvador, one of the oldest indigenous tribes in the hemisphere, having settled in Central America some ten thousand years ago. Culturally akin to the Maya, their genetic inheritance is distinct, and their origin is shrouded in mystery. The story is told of a great shaman-warrior with pale, white skin, who originally came from a mysterious place in the East. She was called the Flying Jaguar, a walker-

between-worlds. When she became chief of the tribe, she was known as the Jaguar Princess. She had three sons, also with pale white skin; but she never married.

None of this “proves” the reality of Atlantis, the Jaguar Princess, or my “other life.” But in reevaluating my present life, I could discern Guidance at critical junctures, and I sensed real magic, or those “invisible bonds” by which all things are secretly linked together—a tonic in our present epidemic of division. My mind opened and my heart ignited in ways I still cannot fathom. I came to accept the Mystery and its serendipitous illuminations, as in that verse by Gerard Manley Hopkins:

As kingfishers catch fire, dragonflies draw flame . . . [3]

For me, Guidelines was like a stone tossed into the center of a still pond; the ripple effects continue down to this very day. Releasing my own fears of consciousness has meant bringing my culturally conditioned belief system into closer alignment with what I am absolutely convinced is our innate knowledge. This is an ongoing task, one which Bob would have called “converting beliefs into Knowns.” It means knowing that my identity as consciousness transcends matter and energy, time and space.

I know that I Know this, because several years ago, when I was diagnosed with a terminal illness, I realized that I was not afraid of death. Death is expansion, not extinction. Furthermore, I know that consciousnesses is the sole reality; it is the unlimited source of everything limited. Matter is but the outermost expression of consciousness, like the hardened crust on a freshly baked biscuit. It has less flexibility, but is of the same essential inner substance. Therefore, everything is ultimately consciousness, and everything is interconnected. There is no “other” of which to be afraid. Or exploit, or hate. Violence—even emotional violence—whether directed at other humans, or at the nonhuman world and its various and sundry intelligences, can only occur if we remain locked in the illusion of isolation. Atlantis perished because it believed in the lies it told itself. This is the message of the Jaguar Princess. She knew better.

1. Robert A. Monroe, *Ultimate Journey* (New York: Doubleday), 1994, p. 1.
2. Ingo Swann, *To Kiss Earth Good-bye* (New York: Dell), 1975, p. 70.
3. “As Kingfishers Catch Fire,” by Gerard Manley Hopkins.